

# **RECRUITING WOMEN INTO THE FIRE SERVICE**

## **EXECUTIVE PLANNING**

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*Appendices A through C Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.*

## **ABSTRACT**

Creating a diverse workforce continues to be a challenge. While mirroring the community is discussed in the workplace, traditionally male occupations, such as firefighting continue to lack strong minority representation. The problem was that Chippewa Valley career fire departments have low numbers of qualified female applicants for entry-level firefighting positions, making it difficult to integrate the departments.

The purpose of this project was to determine what has been and is currently being done to attract women to the fire service. Descriptive research was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What recruitment strategies have been used by Wisconsin fire departments? Of these recruitment strategies, which have been focused on attracting women applicants?
2. What recruitment programs have been implemented nationally to attract women into the fire service and other traditionally male occupations?
3. How were the women currently employed in the fire service recruited?
4. How can the technical college help fire departments in their efforts to recruit women?

The procedure began with a literature review and personal interviews. Two surveys were distributed. One survey was distributed to fire chiefs and the other was distributed to career women firefighters.

Results showed that targeting potential women candidates through word of mouth was the most successful recruitment strategy. The use of women firefighters in

recruitment was strongly recommended by both chiefs and women firefighters.

Recommendations for Chippewa Valley Technical College included forming a recruitment committee, organizing a strong, women-led campaign and hosting a firefighting leadership camp for young women.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In spring of 2001, Chippewa Valley Technical College became the administrator of the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) for 4 full-time or combination fire departments in an 11 county region. Of the 130+ candidates that passed the written and attempted this physical ability test, only 4 were women. One of these four women passed the physical ability test and was placed on an eligibility list.

The problem in the Chippewa Valley area is that fire departments have low numbers of qualified female applicants for entry-level firefighting positions. The purpose of this applied research project is to determine what has been done and is currently being done across the state and nation to attract women into the fire service. From the results of the project, Chippewa Valley Technical College will design a recruitment program aimed at attracting qualified women to a firefighting career.

Descriptive research will be used to answer the following research questions.

1. What recruitment strategies have been used by Wisconsin fire departments?  
Of these recruitment strategies, which have been focused on attracting women applicants?
2. What recruitment programs have been implemented nationally to attract women into the fire service and other traditionally male occupations?
3. How were the women currently employed in the fire service recruited?
4. How can the technical college help departments in their efforts to recruit women?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Creating a diverse workforce continues to be a challenge even as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While mirroring the community seems important and is discussed in the workplace, non-traditional occupations continue to lack minority representation. Non-traditional is defined by the Carl A. Perkins Vocational Education Act as “occupations or fields of work, including careers in computer science, technology, and other emerging high skills occupations, for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work” (United States Code Service, 1997). The fire service qualifies as a non-traditional occupation being comprised of less than two percent women nationally (“Attacks spotlight,” 2002) and less than four percent women locally.

Recruitment of women into the Associate Degree Fire Science programs at the technical colleges in Wisconsin has also been difficult. The Wisconsin Technical College System has eight campuses that offer this type of two-year degree. In the fiscal year 1999-2000 there were 888 students enrolled statewide (personal communication, Fran Johnson, September 4, 2001). Of this number, 63 or 7.1% were women. Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) Fire Service Training has experienced similar challenges in attempting to diversify the fire service student population. CVTC is a two-year institution that prepares students for work in technical arenas. Fire service training is one of these technical arenas. The training provided by CVTC for firefighters is divided into three categories. The program has an associate degree for Fire Protection Technicians, continuing education classes in all fire department response areas such as fire suppression, hazardous materials, fire prevention, confined space, high angle rescue,

emergency medical, etc., and fire brigade training for business and industry. In all of the categories, but especially the associate degree area, CVTC has seen the lack of female fire students. Since the Fire Protection Technician program inception five years ago, the associate degree program has had only three female students apply and begin, out of the forty students accepted during the same period. Of the three female students who were accepted into the associate degree program, one transferred to the nursing program and two transferred to the police science program.

Volunteer fire departments comprise 49 of the 53 fire departments in the CVTC district. Two of the remaining four fire departments are combination departments and two are full-time fire departments. In 2001 CVTC became the administrator of the IAFF/IAFC Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) in an effort to take an active role in fire department recruitment for the four full-time/combo departments and to provide a validated test for fire department use. It was during the administration of this test that the problem of recruitment of qualified female candidates became overwhelmingly apparent. Information from CVTC files showed that of the 126 candidates that passed through the written exam portion of the hiring process, only 4 were women. The next step in the hiring process for the candidates was the CPAT. Of the four women that took the CPAT only one passed the test and was placed on an eligibility list. Male candidates had a much higher success rate with 109 candidates out of 126 passing the physical ability test. This information leads one to believe that, in this circumstance, not only was the number of women applying for an entry-level position on these four fire departments low, the ability of the women to pass the entrance exams was inadequate.



Two of the four full-time/combination CVTC fire departments have hired women in the past who have made the eligibility list. The challenge for the fire departments in the CVTC district does not lie in hiring women once they have made the eligibility list. The challenge lies in the recruitment and preparation of women candidates.

Local recruitment efforts are mostly done shortly before the application period opens. Up to this point, these four fire departments have used newspaper advertisements, web sites, mailings to minority groups, and postings in state employment bulletins to seek applicants for entry firefighter positions. The City of Eau Claire brought women firefighters to career fairs and special career days for middle school girls to promote women firefighters (personal communication, Marguerite Taylor, March 18, 2002). Of the special mailings which announce the beginnings of the firefighter hiring process, nine are sent to organizations which deal specifically with women's concerns. This includes organizations such as the Madison Chapter of the National Organization for Women, Madison, Wisconsin, and the University of Wisconsin Women's Outreach Centers. In the past the City of Eau Claire has sent mailings to the international organization, Women in the Fire Service (WFS). However, when those applying for a position with the city commented on how they had heard about the job, WFS was never listed. Entry level firefighters would not be receiving this publication, therefore the information would have to be passed from a current subscriber, who would probably be a firefighter already, to a woman not employed in the fire service.

There is a probable impact on the recruitment procedures used by these departments as a result of this research. The percentage of women applying for some larger fire departments nationally is much higher than the percentage of women applying

locally. In some areas nationally, the recruitment efforts have succeeded in some way to attract women candidates. After review of successful recruitment efforts, a potential program for recruitment in the Chippewa Valley may be implemented. The technical college may be able to partner with the local fire departments to take an active role in the recruitment and preparation of female candidates.

This project is being submitted to the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy to meet the requirement of the Executive Planning course. It is a completion of the baseline information required for strategic planning to occur. The remaining strategic planning steps will be determined after initial information gathering is completed.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Effect of Recruitment**

It has been 20 years since the first woman was hired on the New York City Fire Department (FDNY). This woman, Brenda Berkman, is now a lieutenant in New York City after breaking the sex barrier in 1982. However since her hire, which followed a lawsuit, only a handful of women can be found in the fire department ranks in New York City. According to the Associated Press, March 17, 2002, nationally, roughly 2 percent of professional firefighters are female. “In New York City, women account for just 28 of 11,400 firefighters – less than 0.3 percent (“Attacks spotlight,” March 17, 2001). Some people point to the difficulty of the physical ability test as the reason why there are so few women on FDNY. Others feel that the recruitment and training efforts are to blame for the lack of women firefighters. Berkman stated, “More women could pass if the city intensified recruiting, then supported female applicants with mentoring and training”

(“Attacks spotlight,” March 17, 2001). The former fire commissioner said New York should retain its difficult physical exam but seek out athletic women who could pass it. “We have done a poor job recruiting women, just like we’ve done a horrible job recruiting minorities,” he said (“Attacks spotlight,” March 17, 2001). If the fire service is to become diversified, active effective recruitment must be done. “If you choose to be pro-active about diversifying your department, recruitment is your number one tool” (Willing, Summer 1994).

The benefits of recruiting are stressed in many publications. Last year many departments around the nation began adopting the IAFF/IAFC Candidate Physical Ability Test for an entry-level firefighter physical exam. The test, which had been validated at ten full-time departments, uses job related skills to test physical ability. The test is to be adopted in its’ entirety by any organization using it for hiring purposes. One condition required to implement this test is the adoption of a recruitment and mentoring program. In the CPAT manual authors have stated, “Diversity should never come by lowering validated entry standards. Rather, it should come from actively recruiting qualified men and women candidates from all racial and ethnic backgrounds for careers in the fire service” (IAFF, 1999). The authors of CPAT feel “Proactively recruiting protected groups is the best method to attract qualified and diverse applicants. This approach accepts the fact that many protected groups have not had adequate exposure to the requirements and rewards of the job of a firefighter” (IAFF, 1999). Others also feel that potential candidates from protected groups do not have adequate information regarding a career in the fire service. Little research has been conducted to determine why these groups do not consider the fire service as a career. This was confirmed in Martinette’s

study of the Virginia Beach Fire Department. “Additionally, the Virginia Beach Fire Department is not as diverse as its neighboring departments. This could be attributed to a lack of effort on the Virginia Beach Fire Department’s part to target minorities in recruiting efforts. In addition, little has been done to study the reasons women and minorities do not seek employment in the fire service” (Martinette, 2000).

The National Center for Women and Policing organization has researched the recruitment of women into the male-dominated field of law enforcement. Their results claim that women do not consider the non-traditional field of law enforcement for several reasons. One major reason women do not consider law enforcement is due to a lack of role models. “Because women comprise only 14 % of sworn law enforcement officers nationwide, they are less visible to the community. In many communities, women never have the opportunity to see women officers as role models. For this reason, policing as a career is often not considered by most college-age women” (NCWP, 2000). Another reason this group feels women candidates for law enforcement careers is low is due to beliefs within law enforcement agencies. “...law enforcement agencies must overcome the common perception that policing is a ‘male-oriented profession’ limited to duties that require physical strength” (NCWP, 2000). Willing (1994) focuses on similar issues in the fire service.

The simplest reason recruitment is necessary is that most people don’t really know what firefighters do. They may have some vague, romanticized idea...but they have little or no understanding of what it is really like to be a firefighter, especially one on your particular department. Your department is unlikely to attract the best candidates if no one has a clue who you are or what

you do. Without recruitment, getting the right people will be a matter of luck. And your department is highly unlikely to attract candidates from groups that do not traditionally hold firefighting as a career option, such as women, people of color, and others who do not constitute what is considered a 'typical' firefighter (Willing, 1994).

Recruitment has been stressed as the key to increasing the numbers of women in the fire service. However, recruitment for recruitments sake is not the answer. Successful recruitment appears to include recruitment of specific target groups of potentially qualified individuals. Armstrong, Berkman, Floren and Willing (1993) claim that sheer numbers of female candidates do not indicate a successful recruitment program. They point out "Many fire departments and recruiters emphasize sheer numbers of women applicants as an indicator of effective recruiting" (Armstrong et al., 1993). While this may statistically increase the chances that qualified women come out of the group, Armstrong et al. believe an organization that internally supports the target groups within the department is the determinant in the success of the recruitment process. Willing (1994) agrees, "Recruitment is not about getting X number of this or that kind of person to show up for the entry-level test. ...Recruitment is about getting the *right* people for the job and being able to keep those people for an entire career".

Mona Kornberg (1991), in her article on promoting fire service diversity, stresses the importance of going beyond numerical targets. "The key to increasing diversity in the fire service lies in developing appropriate recruitment strategies. Through a combination of short- and long-term strategies, efforts should concentrate on attracting potentially

qualified target group populations; for example, women in good physical condition” (Kornberg, 1991).

### **Foundations of a Recruitment Program**

Before the actual implementation of a recruitment campaign, many of the sources in the literature review stressed the importance of building a solid foundation for the program. Sources agreed that prior to the actual one-on-one recruitment, posters etc. many of the following steps must be completed for recruitment to be successful.

In “Recruiting and Retaining Women: A Self-Assessment Guide for Law Enforcement,” the National Center for Women and Policing (2000) outlines eight steps to a good recruitment plan. A good plan includes:

1. Forming a recruitment committee.
2. Designing recruitment brochures and posters
3. Establishing a recruitment team
4. Training recruiters
5. Finding sources of women recruits
6. Incentive programs
7. Youth Outreach programs
8. Monitoring Recruitment efforts (NCWP, 2001)

Kornberg (1991) agrees that a comprehensive recruitment plan is more than just recruitment strategies. Kornberg lists the following steps, some of which are identical to the NCWP plan:

1. Involve key players in the planning and implementation of the program
2. Establish measurable goals and objectives within a realistic time frame

3. Develop organizational supports and prepare organization for change
4. Conduct training in managing, supervising, and working with diversity
5. Create focused recruitment strategies
6. Conduct pre-employment training for women and minorities
7. Balance maintaining high standards and avoid adverse impact
8. Monitor and evaluate (Kornberg, 1991)

Willing (1994) believes there are five components to a successful recruitment program.

1. Identify desirable skills and abilities for your fire department, now and in the future.
2. Identify target groups for recruitment who might be good candidates, without limiting yourself.
3. Develop a public education and advertising program to reach those potential candidates.
4. Provide more in-depth awareness programs for those who are seriously interested.
5. Provide or identify sources of help in specific areas. (Willing, 1994)

Armstrong, et al. (1993) created a “pre-recruitment checklist” which lists prerequisites to a good recruitment program. It is suggested that by implementing these steps there will be greater assurance that once recruited, the retention of women firefighters will be higher. The steps are numerous but include actions in the areas of the application and testing process, policy development and review, recruit training and gear and facilities. By setting the recruitment stage with a department environment that is

gender friendly, potential candidates will be more likely to apply. In her 1997 article for the WFS Quarterly (1997), Terese Floren discusses the methods for a successful recruitment. She believes the success lies in “systematic efforts to make the fire department a place where the people you’re trying to recruit would want to work” (Floren, 1997). Floren (1997) suggests that prior to implementing the early intervention to persuade people to consider the fire service, followed by aggressive outreach efforts, departments must complete the foundations of the recruitment program. She identifies these as review and revision of department policies; training on communications skills, conflict resolution, and diversity issues; implementation of programs such as peer mediation (Floren, 1997). Once these issues have been addressed, the actual recruitment strategies may be set in motion.

While building a solid foundation for a successful recruitment program is of major importance, this author is researching actual recruitment strategies once the foundation has been built.

### **Recruitment Strategies**

With recruitment being the key to developing a diverse, qualified fire service it is important to look at the strategies or methods that have been discussed as being successful tools to recruitment. In their recruitment plans, three authors identified the need to discover where to find and educate potential qualified candidate from target groups. Kornberg (1991) claims the need to create focused recruitment strategies. Willing (1994) states the importance of identifying target groups. Finally the NCWPA (2000) stresses finding sources of women recruits. The research has indicated a variety of methods for discovering potential women candidates. The literature agrees that no one



single method is successful on its own, but many methods must be incorporated into a recruitment program. The authors of CPAT feel there is not one way to target qualified, diverse firefighter applicants (IAFF, 1999). Numerous recruitment strategies were discussed in Martinette's study, (2000) including:

- Solicit from minorities the best method to communicate job openings
  - Send out information regarding possible employment to organizations, colleges, universities, and other sources that may have a high degree of minorities
  - Organize a local high school recruiting program
  - Form alliances with minority organizations
  - Attend and hold recruitment fairs
  - Distribute brochures to minority civic organizations, and churches
  - Host "career days" that focus on females
  - Encourage minority employees to refer minority friends and family
- (Martinette, 2000)

Armstrong et al. (1993) have set up the following tasks involved in a recruitment campaign. Many of these steps are similar to the steps Martinette had identified.

- Identify useful community resources
- Identify career fairs and similar events
- Create brochures, test information, and other literature
- Design and print posters
- Contact the media, write television and radio public service announcements, newspaper advertisements and press releases

- Produce videotapes for orientation and test preparation
- Schedule orientation sessions
- Set up “open house” dates at fire stations
- Set up physical test practice sessions and written test study sessions
- Get logistical support (Armstrong et al., 1993)

Willing (1994) shared her strategies for recruitment in three of her five recruitment plan components. Willing (1994), in her second recruitment plan component, discusses identifying target groups for recruitment. She has suggested that qualified candidates from both genders may be found in medical-related field, mechanical fields or athletic arenas. Willing’s other strategies concur with Marinette and Armstrong. In her third component for developing a successful recruitment program, Willing (1994) discusses the development of a public education/advertising program. She makes the following recruitment suggestions:

1. Include the target group in the visual advertisements.
2. Place the posters in an area that is likely to be seen by the target group.
3. Attend high school career days and job fairs

Willing (1994) expounds on more strategies in the fourth component of her recruitment program. She believes that once a department has interested people, it should use some of the following strategies:

1. Host an open house for interested candidates.
2. Offer a physical ability test practice session.
3. Hold awareness programs for the families of candidates.

4. Hold a focus workshop for specific target groups. Use a cooperative member of this group currently on the department to answer questions.
5. If the department does not have women firefighters, elicit help from women at a nearby department.

**Word of Mouth.** Word of mouth has been used to recruit firefighters of both genders over the years. Firefighting historically was a career that was entered by family members. “In many places it’s (firefighting) has been a family tradition. Fathers influenced sons to enter the fire service; brothers, cousins and nephews often made up a significant portion of the department” (Willing, 1994). This method still appears to be used today. The February 2002 issue of Reader’s Digest contains an article about the ‘Dragon Slayers’, a group of teenage girls were are part of the Aniak, Alaska Fire Rescue Team. How did they get involved in the fire service? “In 1993, when Aniak’s volunteer fire department broadened its mission to include emergency medical services, the squad’s average call volume shot from 20 a year to more that 250. ‘We had to have help,’ says Chief Brown. So they turned to the offspring of the adult volunteers.... At first they were mostly boys, but the balance gradually shifted, and for the past five years the team has been exclusively female” (Yeager, 2002).

**Self recruitment.** Sources stress the importance of using firefighters representing the targeted recruitment group to deliver the recruitment message. “Firefighters ‘self-recruit’, by attracting others who are like them in race, ethnicity, or gender. If a fire department is not diverse, recruiting targeted at women and racial and ethnic minorities helps to broaden the applicant pool. Such recruiting encourages those who might not otherwise apply because they were either unaware of the opportunity or not familiar with the

outstanding career that firefighting provides” (IAFF, 1999). As there are so few women employed in the fire service as a career, they are not as visible in the media and other sites where firefighters are shown.

This was made blatantly clear after the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center attack. Brenda Berkman, a lieutenant with the New York City Fire Department stated, “Everywhere on television in newspapers and in magazines, workers at the WTC site are referred to as men – firemen, policemen- with little or no effort to include the women who have been at the site since the first moment of the disaster” (Miller, 2002). With women being underrepresented by the media, the importance of using women in the recruiting process is paramount. “Recruiters should include firefighters who represent target groups and go out into the community where there are high concentrations of potential target group candidates” (Kornberg, 1991).

**Community Outreach.** The chance to educate both the public, including potential women candidates should be taken at any moment possible. Potential opportunities to spread the word are present in many venues. “Any event where members of the community assemble is an opportunity for the fire department to recruit new applicants and to inform the public about its commitment to a qualified workforce that reflects the diversity of the community. Events may include state fairs, county fairs, health fairs, races and other athletic events, fund drives and open houses” (IAFF, 1999).

By attempting to reach all people and provide programs for all candidates, a department can help eliminate the legal complications, which could occur in some areas where public funds cannot be used to benefit just one group. When Colorado Springs Fire Department was implementing a recruitment program to address the low numbers of

African-American firefighters, they had to confront the legality of a program that targeted and mentored a specific group of individuals. “Agencies that receive public funding may be barred from spending that money on programs that appear to benefit just one group. On the other hand, the Justice Department strongly encourages all fire departments to do targeted recruitment in order to address ethnic and gender imbalances in their workforce” (Floren, 2001).

Some of the community outreach can be done through community organizations. “Minority and women’s organizations provide valuable opportunities to spread the word. This can include the local or regional offices of national organizations such as National Organization of Women (NOW), Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) and local women’s advocacy and employment groups” (IAFF, 1999).

**Media.** Although the recent events of September 11<sup>th</sup> did not affirm so, the media can be used as an effective medium to promote women in the fire service. The advantage to using the radio, television and newspapers is the broad audience these methods influence. Some suggestions for effective employment of media in distributing your recruitment message were given in the CPAT manual. These included:

- Providing information on firefighting as a career on radio and television stations, and in newspapers and magazines with significant women audiences
- Issue press releases announcing upcoming examinations as well as the promotion of women in the department
- Get press coverage of cadets and firefighters, including feature stories on women who are progressing through the academy or who are serving as firefighters
- Place advertisements that feature women performing the duties of firefighters

- Use free PSA, cable access programs and other low or no cost opportunities to promote diversity (IAFF, 1999)

**Brochures and Public Announcements.** In its' brochure, RPI 290, the United States Army has promoted the idea of women in the armed service (US Army, 2000). The brochure is colorful and pictures two professional women in uniform on the cover (see Appendix A). It concisely describes why the Army is an attractive option for a career. It also addresses the fact that women are joining the army. "...judging from the fact that over 15,000 women joined (the Army) last year (US Army, 2000)." Women in the Fire Service (WFS) has created a brochure for young women promoting firefighting as a career (see Appendix B). Creating the brochures, posters, videos and other recruitment information that illustrates the diversity of the fire service is only part of the success of this recruitment tool. These items must be distributed to locations where they will be visible to potential candidates. CPAT authors (IAFF, 1999) suggest information be distributed to:

- Churches
- Gyms and health clubs with predominantly minority or female memberships
- Social service organizations
- Businesses frequented by women
- Women's athletic clubs, teams and events

Armstrong et al. add to this list by including the following:

- High Schools, colleges and universities
- Career fairs

- Explorer posts
- Military bases and discharge centers
- Factories and union offices
- Local women's advocacy groups
- Other city departments
- Volunteer fire departments

**Colleges and High Schools.** High schools and community colleges play an important role in delivering the recruitment message. In a handout from the Department of Justice on-going contacts with schools was highly recommended. "Fire departments should develop and maintain on-going contacts with high school, vocational-technical and college guidance counselors and career placement officers; women's athletic coaches; and instructors teaching fire science courses" (DOJ, 1998). There were many tasks that can be done at the high school and collegiate level to address recruitment of women. The Department of Justice suggested working with the advisors in the schools to:

- Encourage referral of qualified female candidates
- Share application and exam dates and deadlines, career fairs and open houses
- Participate in any high school or college career day opportunities
- Identify any schools willing to assist with the pre-exam training for the written and physical exams
- Involve women and minority members of the department in teaching fire science, fitness and conditioning courses
- Support cadet, explorer and other programs where high school and college students participate in fire department activities to learn about the job

- Encourage elementary school field trips to visit fire stations (DOJ, 1998)

**Fitness centers.** Targeting a group means that you focus your efforts on areas where members of that group may be found. Many of the authors agree that athletic women are prime candidates for the career of firefighting. Therefore, fitness centers and sporting events become locations for targeting recruitment efforts. “Jurisdictions that are successfully recruiting a multicultural workforce use varied recruitment strategies to tap new applicant pools...to recruit females for nontraditional jobs, Pasadena posts job announcements at health spas, gyms and fitness centers” (Farr, 1992).

**Fire Camps and Explorer Posts.** There is beginning to be more participation in the use of camps and Exploring as a recruitment tool. The organization Women in the Fire Service has begun a special project called ‘Camp Blaze’ (see Appendix C). The goal of the Camp Blaze is to “empower and build confidence in young women by providing them with experience in teambuilding and in activities involving physical ability, a chance to explore their commitment to hard work and the opportunity to broaden their practical skills and problem-solving abilities” (WFS, 2001). The camp is conducted in a fire service environment. Fire-focused Explorer posts have also been suggested as potential recruitment arenas.

### **Successful Recruitment Programs**

The Minneapolis Fire Department, Minneapolis, Minnesota, has implemented a highly successful women’s recruitment program. The details of the program were explained during an interview with Battalion Chief Bonnie Bleskachek (personal communication, October 2001). Chief Bleskachek has been on the Minneapolis Fire Department since 1989. She has been promoted through the ranks and achieved the rank



of Battalion Chief in January of 2001. Minneapolis was under a consent decree from 1972 until 2000. During this time the thrust of the recruitment effort was on sheer numbers of minority applicants with the focus being people of color.

The Minnesota Women's Firefighter Association (MWFFA), being unaffiliated with the Minneapolis Fire Department, took the lead in developing a recruitment program for women. This program was done without funding and on volunteer time. Chief Bleskachek claims (personal communication, October 2001), "we were not looking for big numbers of candidates. We looked for women that had a high likelihood of being successful." The targeted population included women on sports teams at the university, such as rugby. The training program for the women recruited started in 1996. The goal was to prepare the women to succeed in the next Minneapolis Fire Department testing process.

Minneapolis Fire Department held a test in 1998. Of the 100 women who had trained through the MWFFA, 45 tested, 33 passed, and 24 were placed in the "high category". Out of the 24 women who were placed in the "high category", 22 were hired. Upon seeing the success of this program, the city of Minneapolis took over the program, and at the time of this printing, Chief Bleskachek is in charge of all training for this program. Chief Bleskachek believes in ongoing recruitment. The efforts in Minneapolis included letters of interest to the women from the "old" hiring list and individual mentoring. In order to have a successful recruitment program, Bleskachek believes one must also focus on retention. The MWFFA promotes retention by offering membership in an organization that can offer support. The group gathers for formal and informal social events, fitness activities, and training.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Definition of Terms**

Non-traditional occupation. Occupations or fields of work, including careers in computer science, technology, and other emerging high skills occupations, for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work. (United States Code Service, 1997)

Recruitment plan/program. The entire recruitment effort. A recruitment plan or program includes a financial plan, resource allocation, training recruitment officer and the specific recruitment strategies.

Recruitment strategies/methods/tools. The approaches used to deliver the recruitment message. Examples include posters, orientations sessions, presentations, etc.

### **Research Methodology**

The desired outcome of this research was to identify special methods fire departments were using to encourage and recruit women into the fire service. Women currently employed in the fire service were also questioned regarding successful recruitment tools. The end result of this research will assist in the development of a plan for recruitment of women into the firefighting field in Wisconsin's Chippewa Valley. A literature review was conducted to identify documented recruitment tools used in encouraging women to join the fire service.

A personal interview was conducted with Battalion Chief Bonnie Bleskachek from the Minneapolis Fire Department, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Battalion Chief Bleskachek is active in the Minnesota Women Fire Fighter's Association and was instrumental in organizing and implementing a highly successful recruitment program for

the most recent Minneapolis Fire Department hiring process. Chief Bleskachek was asked to describe the recruitment program at the Minneapolis Fire Department and how changes in recruitment had been implemented since her hiring date.

Descriptive research methods were used to determine what recruitment strategies were being implemented by Wisconsin fire departments. This research also examined methods used to recruit women currently in the fire service in an effort to establish a list of successful recruitment methods. Two different surveys were distributed, one to Wisconsin fire department chiefs and the other to women currently in the fire service on full-time departments.

The survey to Wisconsin fire department chiefs was distributed to the chiefs present at the Wisconsin Fire Chief's Educational Association annual meeting (see Appendix D). Of the 44 surveys distributed 24 or 54.5% were returned. The results of the survey appear in Appendix E. A different survey was distributed to women currently employed in the fire service on full-time departments (see Appendix F). This survey was distributed to 83 of the women attendees at the 2002 Women in the Fire Service Leadership Conference in San Diego, California. Of the 83 surveys distributed, 41 or 49% were returned. Results of this survey appear in Appendix G.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The author assumes that career fire departments present at the Wisconsin State Fire Chief's Educational Association meeting represent the career fire departments in Wisconsin. It is also assumed that recruitment methods used at the departments not present at the meeting, are similar to the recruitment methods used at the departments that completed the surveys.

The author assumes that the group of career female firefighters who completed the survey is a representation of female firefighters across the nation. It is assumed that the recruitment methods that were successful with the surveyed women in the fire service would be successful with the women in the fire service nationally who were not surveyed.

Financial constraints, time constraints and lack of a complete listing of women currently employed as career firefighters prevented this survey from being distributed to all Wisconsin career fire departments and all women in the fire service. Therefore, some recruitment methods may have been excluded from this research.

## **RESULTS**

**1. What recruitment strategies have been used by Wisconsin fire departments? Of these recruitment strategies, which have been focused on attracting women applicants?**

The surveys completed by Wisconsin fire chiefs indicated a wide variety of recruitment strategies have been used across the state. Each recruitment strategy on the survey had at least five fire departments using it. The recruitment strategies implemented by the most departments included open houses and station tours with 83% department participation, special group presentations with 71% department participation, and career fairs and department brochures with 66% department participation. Recruitment activities that had low fire department participation included posters with 20% department involvement, mailers to organizations with 25% department involvement and municipal web pages and Explorer posts with 33% department involvement.

A few municipalities involved their Human Resources Department (HRD) in the firefighter recruitment process. Typically, the HRD was responsible for public service announcements (37%), delivering testing and hiring information packets (33%), and hosting the orientation and information sessions for candidates (29%).

Most of the fire departments (45%) go through the hiring process at least once in a two-year time period, with some (33%) completing the process as often as necessary. For most departments (54%) this process involves testing 50 or fewer candidates. Women made up 0 to 2% of the candidates testing for 15 departments (62%). Of the remaining departments, 8 (33%) had 3% to 10% women applicants, and only one department had 10% to 20% women applicants.

Approximately 124 of 2421 firefighting personnel (5%) in the Wisconsin departments that responded were women. This number is somewhat skewed by the inclusion of Madison Fire Department, Madison, Wisconsin. Madison Fire Department has 284 personnel with 47 women or 16.5%. Eleven or 45% of the departments responding had no women firefighters. Of the departments with women (77%) have hired their first women within the last 10 years. 85% of the departments with women did not do any special recruitment for the women they hired. Only one department had implemented a special recruitment by targeting potential female candidates through direct advertising.

An overwhelming 86% of the departments felt the number of qualified candidates was small. The main reasons those departments felt there was a lack of qualified women firefighter candidates was because women do not consider a career in firefighting (85%), recruitment efforts do not focus on attracting women candidates (52%) and women are not prepared physically for a career in the fire service (47%).

## **2. What recruitment programs have been implemented nationally to attract women into the fire service and other traditionally male occupations?**

The literature review identified only one program that had documented successful recruitment. That program was the recruitment program conducted initially by the Minnesota Women Fire Fighters Association, and is now lead by the city of Minneapolis. The Minneapolis program was successful in attracting candidates that had the potential to succeed in the fire service by directing their focus toward collegiate athletic teams. Once interested, the women were prepared for the entrance requirements for hire on the Minneapolis Fire Department.

Other programs, such as Camp Blaze, have had full registrations of women participating in the camp, but due to the newness of the program, the data on how many of these women enter the fire service will not be known for years.

Law enforcement has more women among their ranks nationally. This number, 14%, may be due to the recruiting they have done in the past. The suggestions for recruiting parallel suggestions from the fire service.

## **3. How were the women currently employed in the fire service recruited?**

The mean and median age of women respondents entering the fire service was 26 years old. Most of the firefighters had learned of the opportunity to become a firefighter by word of mouth (70%). Practice sessions for the physical ability tests, and test information and hiring packets were the next most common ways women heard of the opportunity for firefighting (15%).

The recruitment/hiring process for most of the women had several support

systems. Written materials, about the position and hiring process, was available to 78% of the women. There were orientation sessions for the physical ability test held for 65% of the women and physical ability test practice sessions for 51%.

Less than half of the women candidates hired had completed formal firefighter training. The firefighter training most (44%) candidates had completed was firefighter certification/firefighter training. In comparison, 54% of the candidates had some level of emergency medical training prior to beginning the firefighter hiring process.

In the last five years 49% of the women responding had been hired. The women responding to the survey have seen changes in the recruitment efforts in a variety of activities. Career fairs and testing and hiring information changes were seen by 41% of the respondents. An addition of a web page was noted by 39% of the respondents. Changes in the department brochures or the addition of a brochure occurred at the departments of 34% of the respondents. Finally, 32% of the respondents reported the addition of special group presentations, newspaper advertisements and practice sessions for the physical ability tests.

When asked which recruitment efforts were the most successful in attracting women, the respondents felt using women in the recruitment programming was paramount (34%). Other success factors included targeting women's athletic teams and recruiting through camps and youth programs at an early age.

The survey respondents felt that there were not larger numbers of women entering the fire service because women do not consider a career in the fire service (76%) and women are not physically prepared for a career in the fire service (76%). It is still perceived by respondents that the general public believes that women do not belong in

the fire service (68%). It was also strongly felt that the recruitment efforts do not reach potential women candidates (63%) and do not focus on attracting women candidates (59%).

#### **4. How can the technical college help departments in their recruitment efforts?**

The fire chiefs identified many ways the technical college could help to increase the number of qualified women candidates. The author categorized the responses into four categories. The chiefs felt the technical college could help in the following areas;

- Recruitment
- Networking
- Mentoring
- Education

In the area of recruitment, the chiefs listed the following actions the technical college could take.

1. Invest in recruitment efforts
2. Develop a list of qualified candidates
3. Recruit
4. Just keep recruitment efforts going and the situations will remedy itself, hopefully.
5. Promote the fire service career to students

Networking could be accomplished through connecting women to volunteer Departments and acting as a clearinghouse for employment information for high school and college women.

The fire chiefs suggested mentoring through using current women firefighters as



role models at career fairs and in recruitment efforts. In the area of education, the fire chiefs felt the colleges could help by;

1. Promote the fact that our main job is not firefighting. It is EMS/Rescue services.
2. Train instructors to have a better understanding of education and the female
3. Offer more classes and schedule a state exam at the end of each class so there is very little down time between completion of the course and exam time.
4. Convince them they can do the job
5. Increase the promotion of women in the fire service and use examples where women are working in the service
6. May have a course developed to prepare all candidate on preparing for both the written and physical agility exams
7. Get then physically prepared to take the physical test
8. The technical colleges could help change the public mentality of women in firefighting in a broader approach than individual fire departments can. We need a larger pool and our future mentoring plans may not do enough of that
9. Fitness training
10. Far earlier than tech college, charter schools focusing on public emergency service
11. Offer courses with hands on training and advertise the program with female firefighters.

## **DISCUSSION**

Successful recruitment is the key to developing a diverse workforce. “If you choose to be pro-active about diversifying your department, recruitment is your number one tool (Willing, Summer 1994)”. Once diversity has become important to an organization and the organization is committed to recruitment, an actual recruitment campaign must be waged. Many fire departments, including the four Chippewa Valley fire departments, use a band-aid approach to recruitment of minorities. Sending out flyers and putting advertisements in “big city” newspapers will not achieve the desired affect, applications from qualified minority candidates.

A five-step approach must be taken to implement a successful recruitment campaign. These steps include:

1. Developing a healthy department environment
2. Organizing a recruitment team including women
3. Identifying target groups
4. Addressing target groups to motivate and educate with role models
5. Implementing a firefighter preparation and mentoring program

In Step One, the department must embrace a diverse workforce. Floren (1997) believes this must be an effort to affect the whole of the fire department. The recruitment campaign must be “systematic efforts to make the fire department a place where the people you’re trying to recruit would want to work” (Floren, 1997). Those members who do not embrace and proclaim the advantages of a diverse workforce must at least respect minorities and not work against the diversity efforts. This first step may be accomplished through administration’s financial and verbal demonstration of commitment to diversity

and through department training. To make the most of the recruitment efforts, this should be done prior to the implementation of the recruitment strategies.

A team must then be organized to plan and carry out the recruitment strategies. This team must include women and key decision-makers. The team will determine which strategies will be used and of these strategies, which will be short-term and on-going strategies. It is important to the success of the campaign that both short-term and on-going strategies are used. “The key to increasing diversity...lies in developing appropriate recruitment strategies. Through a combination of short-term and long-term strategies, efforts should concentrate on attracting potentially qualified target group populations” (Kornberg, 1991).

After the department environment is primed and ready for minority representation, and the team has completed their tasks, targeted groups need to be identified. The most successful suggestions for targeting women included word-of-mouth, addressing women’s organizations, high school and collegiate sport teams, young girl’s organizations and career fairs.

When approaching these targeted groups, the message is to educate and motivate. The education portion of the message is to explain a firefighter’s job description, pay and benefits, and roles and responsibilities. “The simplest reason recruitment is necessary is that most people don’t really know what firefighters do” (Willing, 1994). Then the motivation step must stress that women can be and are very successful in this career. Almost all surveyed, both fire chiefs and women in the fire service, agreed that the information should be carried through women in the fire service. When a department does not have any women personnel, it was suggested that women from neighboring

departments help in the recruitment process. It would be interesting to have a video-tape made of women firefighters at all levels, talking about their jobs and what they do. The tape could begin with a recruit, move to a firefighter, captain, battalion chief and finally chief. The importance of women being visible as working firefighters was stressed over and over again throughout the surveys.

The real challenge lies in how the fire service can carry out the number one suggestion for recruitment success. In many of the surveys, firefighters stated they found out about the job through word-of-mouth. How can this be accomplished in a recruitment campaign? The ideal world may look like this. The department has embraced diversity and both male and female firefighters look for potential male and female candidates as they move through their lives. A male firefighter knows someone whose daughter may be a candidate and he contacts someone from the recruitment team. Together, the firefighter and a female recruitment team member approach the parent and young adult. A female firefighter notices someone at the athletic club who has potential to be a firefighter and she mentions the career to her. Does this not revert back to the way firefighters were recruited many years past? The message was carried from fathers to sons, uncles, friends and brothers (Willing, 1994). The medium to be successful, word-of-mouth, does not need to change only the gender to whom the message passes changes. Therefore, when approaching women's groups with the educational and motivational message, the recruiter must encourage the women to help by spreading the message to potential candidates.

Once qualified women have shown an interest in the fire service a mentoring and firefighter preparation program can help them to achieve success in passing the entrance

exams. This mentoring program should continue on until the woman reaches the phase that she becomes a mentor to a new woman firefighter.

The technical college can be instrumental in helping the departments with all of the steps of this process. The college has programs for embracing diversity, if the departments are ready and willing. The college can support the departments by providing them with resources to create videos, brochures and posters. The college can use the female firefighters, who are fire instructors, to promote the fire science program to women. The college can be the spearhead of a women's support organization. Through meeting with the chief officers, the college can educate the chiefs on how to implement a successful recruitment campaign.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

After reviewing the research and study results, the author has suggested five recommendations the technical college can use to increase the numbers of qualified women firefighter candidates. All of these steps will be successful only with cooperation on the part of the fire departments. The college cannot change the environment within a fire department. The college cannot change the attitudes of the current men and women employed by the fire department. These steps can be accomplished only from within. However, once the department has created a 'gender-friendly' environment, the college can help to recruit women.

**Recommendation One.** The college must avail itself to the fire departments within its jurisdiction. If the college and the fire departments work hand-in-hand on the recruitment steps, besides the first environment step, success can be achieved. It becomes a win/win situation. The college has a fire science program to market and is attempting to

diversify this program. The fire departments are looking for qualified women who are trained to a high level of competency. The college needs the backing from the fire departments and the fire departments need the qualified candidates the college can produce.

What is meant by ‘the college must avail itself to the fire departments’? The college must approach the fire departments and request participation on the recruitment committees. The college can bring forth the marketing resources available and help with developing the recruitment strategies. The fire chiefs wanted active participation in recruitment from the college.

CVTC must also join with the fire departments implementing the active recruitment strategies. The college must create brochures and posters encouraging women, and should be at booths and career fairs along side the fire departments.

**Recommendation Two.** The college can take an active role in creating an organization for women firefighters, both volunteer and career, for recruitment purposes. This organization would not only build camaraderie between the women firefighters in the CVTC jurisdiction, but would provide a nucleus for developing other recruitment strategies. Similar to the Minnesota Women Fire Fighters Association, this group could take an active part in recruitment. It would be an advantage to the college by helping to diversify the fire science program. The biggest advantage in the development of this group would be the encouragement of ‘word-of-mouth’ recruitment, which has been shown to be the most successful recruitment tool.

**Recommendation Three.** After receiving the support from the fire departments and organizing a women’s support group, the college can promote and market a ‘fire

camp'. This camp, similar to 'Camp Blaze', would be a leadership camp for young women who have an interest in the fire service. The efforts of the college, with the help of the fire departments and the women in the support group could develop and implement such a camp.

**Recommendation Four.** The studies pointed strongly to the use of women in the recruitment effort. The college can play a part by continuing to train female fire service instructors. Firefighter II certification is required to become a fire service instructor. At the point of this writing, three of the five women firefighters within CVTC's jurisdiction, who are trained to the Firefighter II level, are instructors. One of the other women in this group of five is currently in instructor training. Using these women in very visible leadership roles will help to encourage women to consider the fire service as a career. The college needs to ensure, as the fire departments do, that the training environment is also 'gender-friendly'. This can be accomplished through working with the male fire service instructors to gain their support in all diversity efforts.

**Recommendation Five.** After these steps have been implemented more research needs to be done to evaluate the impact the recruitment campaigns have had on numbers of women applying and successfully passing through the hiring process. If these steps have not made a positive impact, studies need to be continued to determine what strategies may be more successful.

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February 25, 2002

TO: Fire Department Chiefs  
Human Resources Personnel

FR: Marcy Marohl  
Chippewa Valley Technical College  
Fire Service Program Director

#### RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS

As part of my Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy, I am completing an Applied Research Project on the recruitment of women. From my reading, and conversations with fire service personnel, I believe that there are not adequate pools of qualified women candidates applying for entry-level firefighting positions. There has been little research conducted to determine the reasons why the pool of qualified women candidates is so low. This paper will research what is being done at different Wisconsin fire departments to recruit ALL firefighting candidates. The project will also report any special recruitment programs that are being conducted targeting specific populations. Depending on the results of the paper, Chippewa Valley Technical College may be able to take a leadership role in preparing women candidates for entry into the fire service, thereby easing the burden of municipalities and fire department in their efforts to encourage women to enter the hiring process.

In order to get an accurate picture of recruitment efforts, I am asking for assistance in completing the enclosed survey to the best of your ability. The material shared through this survey will be held confidential. Only information or statements that you want shared will be identified in my research project. Please deliver the survey to the most appropriate individual in your organization for completion. In some cases this individual may be the chief or a fire department designee, in some cases this may be the municipality's human resource department, and in some cases this may be an outside organization hired for conducting the recruitment and hiring process.

Please return this survey to me in the enclosed envelope. I would like to have all information gathered to compile by March 21, 2002. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please call me at 715-855-7503. I truly appreciate your help. If you indicate so on the survey, copies of my completed paper will be provided to you.

# Wisconsin Fire Department Survey

Compiled by Marcy Marohl  
Chippewa Valley Technical College  
Fire Service Program Director  
February 2002

1. Who is responsible for the recruitment of entry-level firefighters? Please check the party responsible for any of the following recruitment efforts that are completed by your department/municipality. Leave the spaces blank by those activities that are not done within your jurisdiction. Please list recruitment efforts that have not been included in the "other" space.

Activity	Department	Human Resources	Other (explain)
Career fairs			
Special group presentations (Boy/Girl Scouts, sport teams, etc.)			
Department brochures			
Testing/hiring information packets			
Posters			
Television Public Service Announcements			
Radio Public Service Announcements			
Municipal Web Page			
Orientation/Information Sessions			
Open house/Station tours			
Practice sessions physical ability tests			
Mailer to organizations			
Staffed booth in public assembly area			
Ride along Program			
"Fire" Explorer Program			
Other			

2. How often does the fire department go through the hiring process?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Annually
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Every other year
  - \_\_\_\_\_ As often as necessary
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other
3. Approximately how many candidates complete an application and begin the hiring process?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 0 – 50 candidates
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 50 – 100 candidates
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 100 – 200 candidates
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 200 – 500 candidates
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Over 500 candidates

Approximately how many of these candidates are women? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What are the entry-level firefighter position requirements? (check all that apply)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Age limit – Age: \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Valid Driver's License
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Previous firefighting experience:                 volunteer       or       full-time
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Firefighter I certification
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Firefighter II certification
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Medical Training – Level: \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Driver/Operator certification
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Credits toward an Associate Degree – Number: \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Associate Degree or higher
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor Degree
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many personnel do you have on your fire department? Include all positions from fire chief to firefighters but do not include administrative assistants or clerical personnel.
6. How many of your personnel are women?

If your department currently does not have any women, have you ever had any women on your department?

7. If you have had or do have women on your department, approximately when did you hire your first woman?

Was a special recruitment program done at that time to attract women candidates?  
If yes, please describe the program that was implemented.



8. Do you feel the number of qualified women firefighter candidates is small?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

If yes, in your opinion, why is there a lack of qualified women in the firefighter applicant pool? (Check all that you think apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ Women do not consider a career in firefighting.

\_\_\_\_\_ The general public still believes that women do not belong in the fire service.

\_\_\_\_\_ Recruitment efforts do not reach potential women candidates.

\_\_\_\_\_ Recruitment efforts do not focus on attracting women candidates.

\_\_\_\_\_ There is a fire department attitude that women do not belong in the fire service.

\_\_\_\_\_ Women are not prepared physically for career in the fire service.

\_\_\_\_\_ Women are not prepared to pass the written fire service exam.

\_\_\_\_\_ Women are not prepared well educationally for a career in the fire service.

If you check this, what do they normally lack...

\_\_\_\_\_ Firefighter certification

\_\_\_\_\_ Driver/Operator certification

\_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Medical certification

\_\_\_\_\_ Associate Degree

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's Degree

\_\_\_\_\_ Women do not have previous firefighting experience.

9. What role do you feel the technical college can play in increasing the number of qualified women firefighter candidates?

### **OPTIONAL INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please send me a copy of your final results.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please contact me.

Other comments:

Wisconsin Fire Chiefs' Survey - **RESULTS**

Compiled by Marcy Marohl  
 Chippewa Valley Technical College  
 Fire Service Program Director  
 February 2002

1. Who is responsible for the recruitment of entry-level firefighters? Please check the party responsible for any of the following recruitment efforts that are completed by your department/municipality. Leave the spaces blank by those activities that are not done within your jurisdiction. Please list recruitment efforts that have not been included in the "other" space.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Human Resources</b>	<b>Other (explain)</b>
Career fairs	<b>16 or 66%</b>	<b>2 or 8%</b>	
Special group presentations (Boy/Girl Scouts, sport teams, etc.)	<b>17 or 71%</b>	<b>0</b>	
Department brochures	<b>16 or 66%</b>	<b>2 or 8%</b>	
Testing/hiring information packets	<b>13 or 54%</b>	<b>8 or 33%</b>	<b>Police/Fire Commission</b>
Posters	<b>5 or 20%</b>	<b>2 or 8%</b>	
Television Public Service Announcements	<b>7 or 29%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Police/Fire Commission</b>
Radio Public Service Announcements	<b>11 or 46%</b>	<b>9 or 37%</b>	<b>Police/Fire Commission</b>
Municipal Web Page	<b>8 or 33%</b>	<b>3 or 13%</b>	<b>Police/Fire Commission</b>
Orientation/Information Sessions	<b>13 or 54%</b>	<b>7 or 29%</b>	<b>Police/Fire Commission</b>
Open house/Station tours	<b>20 or 83%</b>	<b>0</b>	
Practice sessions physical ability tests	<b>13 or 54%</b>	<b>3 or 13%</b>	<b>Police/Fire Commission</b>
Mailer to organizations	<b>6 or 25%</b>	<b>3 or 13%</b>	
Staffed booth in public assembly area	<b>13 or 54%</b>	<b>0</b>	
Ride along Program	<b>13 or 54%</b>	<b>0</b>	
"Fire" Explorer Program	<b>8 or 33%</b>	<b>0</b>	
Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cable access</b></li> <li>• <b>Technical College Intern Program</b></li> <li>• <b>Internet</b></li> <li>• <b>Cadet program: hired at a cheaper rate, guaranteed a spot in the Academy</b></li> </ul>			

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b><u>6 or 25%</u></b> | Annually              |
| <b><u>5 or 20%</u></b> | Every other year      |
| <b><u>8 or 33%</u></b> | As often as necessary |
| <b><u>3 or 13%</u></b> | Other                 |

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| <b><u>13 or 54%</u></b> | 0 – 50 candidates    |
| <b><u>3 or 13%</u></b>  | 50 – 100 candidates  |
| <b><u>3 or 13%</u></b>  | 100 – 200 candidates |
| <b><u>3 or 13%</u></b>  | 200 – 500 candidates |
| <b><u>2 or 8%</u></b>   | over 500 candidates  |

- **0%**                    **5 respondents**
- **1 to 2%**            **8 respondents**
- **3 to 5%**            **5 respondents**
- **6 to 10%**          **4 respondents**
- **10 to 20%**        **2 respondent**

- 15 or 62%** Age limit – Age: **18**
- 24 or 100%** Valid Driver's License
- 3 or 13%** Previous firefighting experience: volunteer or full-time
- 13 or 54%** Firefighter I certification
- 6 or 25%** Firefighter II certification
- \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Medical Training – Level: **Basic: 8 or 33%**  
**Paramedic: 6 or 25%**
- 1 or 4%** Driver/Operator certification
- 3 or 13%** Credits toward an Associate Degree – Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- 0** Associate Degree or higher
- 0** Bachelor Degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: **3 or 13%: High School Graduate**  
**1 or 4%: Hazardous Materials Operations**  
**1 or 4%: Hazardous Materials Technician**  
**1 or 4%: Residency**

- Total all departments** **2421 personnel**  
**Total women** **124 or 5%**

**11 or 45% of the responding fire departments currently had no women firefighters.**

6. How many of your personnel are women? **See above**  
If your department currently does not have any women, have you ever had any women on your department?

**One respondent - Yes**

7. If you have had or do have women on your department, approximately when did you hire your first woman?

**1986 – 1 respondents**

**1989 – 2 respondents**

**1991 – 1 respondent**

**1992 – 2 respondent**

**1996 – 1 respondent**

**1997 – 2 respondents**

**1999 – 3 respondents**

**2001 – 1 respondent**

Was a special recruitment program done at that time to attract women candidates?

If yes, please describe the program that was implemented.

**No – 11 respondents**

**Yes – 2 respondents**

- **Directed advertising toward potential female candidates**
- **Chief said we would hire women so we hired two, one quit**

8. Do you feel the number of qualified women firefighter candidates is small?

**21 or 86%**      yes

**3 or 13%**      no

If yes, in your opinion, why is there a lack of qualified women in the firefighter applicant pool? (Check all that you think apply)

**18 or 85%**      Women do not consider a career in firefighting.

**3 or 14%**      The general public still believes that women do not belong in the fire service.

**7 or 33%**      Recruitment efforts do not reach potential women candidates.

**11 or 52%**      Recruitment efforts do not focus on attracting women candidates.

**2 or 9%**      There is a fire department attitude that women do not belong in the fire service.

**10 or 47%**      Women are not prepared physically for career in the fire service.

**0**      Women are not prepared to pass the written fire service exam.

**4 or 19%**      Women are not prepared well educationally for a career in the fire service.

If you check this, what do they normally lack...

**4 or 100%**      Firefighter certification

\_\_\_\_\_      Driver/Operator certification

\_\_\_\_\_      Emergency Medical certification

**1 or 25%**      Associate Degree

\_\_\_\_\_      Bachelor's Degree

**5 or 23%** Women do not have previous firefighting experience.  
**3 or 14%** Other:

- **Not well informed of process/requirements**
- **No role models**
- **Women still geared toward traditional roles**

9. What role do you feel the technical college can play in increasing the number of qualified women firefighter candidates?
- a. **Invest in recruitment efforts to get women into the fire service courses.**
  - b. **Connect women to volunteer departments**
  - c. **Utilize current women firefighters as role models at career fairs and in recruitment efforts.**
  - d. **Promote the fact that our main job is not firefighting. It is EMS/Rescue services.**
  - e. **I would like to see the Wisconsin Fire Service (through the technical colleges) develop a list of qualified candidates. Note: This thought is “far out of the box” for most chiefs**
  - f. **Train instructors to have a better understanding of education and the female**
  - g. **Offer more classes and schedule a state exam at the end of each class so there is very little down time between completion of the course and exam time**
  - h. **I am with a combination department and therefore able to take personnel with no training and work with them to receive this training. Career personnel are required to be Firefighter I certified, EMT-Basic, and Motor Pump Operator certified. The technical college does a good job in providing these classes**
  - i. **Recruit**
  - j. **Convince them they can do the job**
  - k. **Use of current females in service to assist with recruitment**
  - l. **Check with states that have better female rates (i.e. California) on how they recruit, advertise, etc.**
  - m. **Just keep recruiting efforts going and the situation will remedy itself, hopefully**
  - n. **Does not apply to our department**
  - o. **Increase the promotion of women in the fire service and use examples of where women are working in the service**
  - p. **May have a course developed to prepare all candidate on preparing for both the written and physical agility exams**
  - q. **Promote the fire service career to students**
  - r. **Get them physically prepared to take the physical test**
  - s. **Clearing house for employment info for high/college women**
  - t. **Fire departments are looking for more candidates that are qualified physically and mentally.**
  - u. **The technical colleges could help change the public mentality of women in firefighting in a broader approach than individual fire departments can. We need a larger pool and our future mentoring plans may not do enough of that.**
  - v. **Fitness training**

**OPTIONAL INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

**12 or 50%** Please send me a copy of your final results.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please contact me.

Other comments:

March 7, 2002

TO: Women Firefighters on Full-time Departments

FR: Marcy Marohl  
Chippewa Valley Technical College  
Fire Service Program Director

#### RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS

As part of my Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy, I am completing an Applied Research Project on the recruitment of women. The purpose of the paper is to determine what is being done in Wisconsin to recruit women candidates for entry firefighter positions. A second purpose of this paper is to determine what recruitment efforts have been successful in other parts of the country. Finally, my goal is to determine how the technical college system in Wisconsin, and particularly Chippewa Valley Technical College, can take a leadership role in preparing women candidates for entry into the fire service.

In order to get a glimpse of the history of national recruitment efforts, or the lack of national recruitment efforts, I am asking you to complete the enclosed survey to the best of your ability. The material shared on this survey will be held confidential. Only the information or statements you want shared will be identified in my research paper.

Please return this survey to me in the enclosed envelope or complete it while at the conference and give it to me. I would like to have all information gathered to compile by April 1, 2002. If you have any questions regarding the survey, feel free to call me at 715-855-7503. Questions can also be addressed to me through email at [mmarohl@chippewa.tec.wi.us](mailto:mmarohl@chippewa.tec.wi.us) or faxed to 715-855-7522. I truly appreciate your help. If you indicate so on the survey, copies of my completed paper will be provided to you.

Survey – Fire Service Women on Full-time Fire Departments

Compiled by Marcy Marohl  
Chippewa Valley Technical College  
Fire Service Program Director  
February 2002

1. How old were you when you first became interested in firefighting as a career?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What sparked your interest in applying for an entry firefighter position? If any of the following activities were part of the encouragement when you applied, please place a check in the corresponding space.

Activity	
Career fairs	
Special group presentations (Boy/Girl Scouts, sport teams, etc.)	
Department brochures	
Testing/hiring information packets	
Posters	
Television Public Service Announcements	
Newspaper Advertisements	
Radio Public Service Announcements	
Municipal Web Page	
Orientation/Information Sessions	
Open house/Station tours	
Practice sessions physical ability tests	
Mailer to organizations	
Staffed booth in public assembly area	
Ride along Program	
“Fire” Explorer Program	
Private Recruitment Firm	
Word of Mouth	
Other	



3. When you applied for a full-time fire department, were any of the following support systems available to you? Check all that were in place when you applied.
- ☐ Written materials about the position and hiring process
  - ☐ Mentoring – Current women on the department meeting with you
  - ☐ Orientation for the written exam
  - ☐ Orientation for the physical ability test
  - ☐ Written exam practice sessions
  - ☐ Physical ability test practice sessions
  - ☐ Interviewing skills practice sessions
  - ☐ Other
4. Were you encouraged to participate in, or had you completed, any of the following educational/experiential opportunities to explore the career of firefighting? Check all that apply.
- ☐ Ride along/Job shadow
  - ☐ Firefighter training or Firefighter Certification
  - ☐ Emergency Medical Training – Level: \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Hazardous Materials Training
  - ☐ Associate or Bachelor's Degree in Fire Science or a related field
  - ☐ Volunteer firefighting
  - ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
5. When were you hired on a full-time fire department? (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Since you have been employed in the fire service, how have the recruitment efforts changed? Check all that apply.

\_\_\_\_\_ I haven't seen any change in the recruitment efforts at my department.

\_\_\_\_\_ The following recruitment efforts have been implemented since my hire. Check all that apply.

<b>Activity</b>	
Career fairs	
Special group presentations (Boy/Girl Scouts, sport teams, etc.)	
Department brochures	
Testing/hiring information packets	
Posters	
Television Public Service Announcements	
Newspaper Advertisements	
Radio Public Service Announcements	
Municipal Web Page	
Orientation/Information Sessions	
Open house/Station tours	
Practice sessions physical ability tests	
Mailer to organizations	
Staffed booth in public assembly area	
Ride along Program	
"Fire" Explorer Program	
Private Recruitment Firm	
Word of Mouth	
Other	

7. What recruitment efforts do you feel are the most successful in attracting women firefighter candidates?
8. What programs are the most successful in preparing women to successfully pass the firefighter entrance written, physical ability and interview portions of the hiring process?
9. In your opinion, why are there not larger numbers of women applying for entry firefighter positions? Check all that apply and add others.
- ☐ Women do not consider a career in firefighting.
  - ☐ The general public still believes that women do not belong in the fire service.
  - ☐ Recruitment efforts do not reach potential women candidates.
  - ☐ Recruitment efforts do not focus on attracting women candidates.
  - ☐ There is a fire department attitude that women do not belong in the fire service.
  - ☐ Women are not prepared physically for career in the fire service.
  - ☐ Women are not prepared to pass the written fire service exam.
  - ☐ Women are not prepared well educationally for a career in the fire service.
  - ☐ If you check this, what do they normally lack...
    - ☐ Firefighter certification
    - ☐ Driver/Operator certification
    - ☐ Emergency Medical certification
    - ☐ Associate Degree
    - ☐ Bachelor's Degree
  - ☐ Women do not have previous firefighting experience.
  - ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
10. What role can a community or technical college play in increasing the number of women candidates?
- ☐ Firefighting "camps"
  - ☐ Fitness training
  - ☐ Fire Service certification training
  - ☐ Career information sessions
  - ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
11. How can the college attract women into participating in a "firefighter prep" program?

12. Other comments:

**OPTIONAL INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please send me a copy of your final results.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please contact me.

Other comments:

Survey – Fire Service Women on Full-time Fire Departments - **RESULTS**

Compiled by Marcy Marohl  
 Chippewa Valley Technical College  
 Fire Service Program Director  
 February 2002

1. How old were you when you first became interested in firefighting as a career?

**<18 Years old – 2**

**18 years old – 1**

**19 years old – 2**

**20 years old – 1**

**21 years old – 3**

**22 years old – 2**

**24 years old – 3**

**25 years old – 5**

**26 years old – 3**

**27 years old – 1**

**28 years old – 5**

**29 years old – 3**

**30 years old – 5**

**31 years old – 1**

**32 years old – 1**

**34 years old – 1**

**35 years old – 1**

**38 years old – 1**

**Median age – 26 years old**

**Mean age – 26 years old**

2. What sparked your interest in applying for an entry firefighter position? If any of the following activities were part of the encouragement when you applied, please place a check in the corresponding space.

<b>Activity</b>	
Career fairs	<b>2 or 5 %</b>
Special group presentations (Boy/Girl Scouts, sport teams, etc.)	<b>1 or 2%</b>
Department brochures	<b>3 or 7%</b>
Testing/hiring information packets	<b>6 or 15%</b>
Posters	<b>2 or 5%</b>
Television Public Service Announcements	<b>1 or 2%</b>
Newspaper Advertisements	<b>1 or 2%</b>
Radio Public Service	

Announcements	<b>0</b>
Municipal Web Page	<b>0</b>
Orientation/Info. Sessions	<b>4 or 10%</b>
Open house/Station tours	<b>4 or 10%</b>
Practice sessions physical ability tests	<b>6 or 15%</b>
Mailer to organizations	<b>0</b>
Staffed booth in public assembly area	<b>0</b>
Ride along Program	<b>3 or 7%</b>
“Fire” Explorer Program	<b>2 or 5%</b>
Private Recruitment Firm	<b>0</b>
Word of Mouth	<b>29 *or 70%</b>
Other	<b>See below**</b>

**\*Word of mouth sources**

- **Female friend in the fire service – 2**
- **Relative on a department**
- **Friend on a department**
- **Fire chief – friend**
- **Friends**
- **Dated a volunteer**
- **Neighbor firefighter**
- **Former co-worker became a firefighter**
- **Family**

**\*\*Other:**

- **Laid off**
- **Own inquiry**
- **Flyers at sporting events**
- **EMS/Rescue – 6**
- **Library Career Book**
- **Take with someone else testing**
- **Women in the Fire Service Conference**
- **Hired to coach women for entry**
- **Volunteer**

3. When you applied for a full-time fire department, were any of the following support systems available to you? Check all that were in place when you applied.

<b><u>32 or 78%</u></b>	Written materials about the position and hiring process
<b><u>7 or 17%</u></b>	Mentoring – Current women on the department meeting with you
<b><u>14 or 34%</u></b>	Orientation for the written exam
<b><u>27 or 65%</u></b>	Orientation for the physical ability test
<b><u>5 or 12%</u></b>	Written exam practice sessions
<b><u>21 or 51%</u></b>	Physical ability test practice sessions
<b><u>7 or 17%</u></b>	Interviewing skills practice sessions
<b><u>2 or 3%</u></b>	Other
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phone contact</b></li> <li>• <b>Informal practice sessions at station (Cadet Explorer)</b></li> </ul>

4. Were you encouraged to participate in, or had you completed, any of the following educational/experiential opportunities to explore the career of firefighting? Check all that apply.

<u><b>5 or 12%</b></u>	Ride along/Job shadow
<u><b>18 or 44%</b></u>	Firefighter training or Firefighter Certification
<u><b>2 or 3%</b></u>	Emergency Medical Training – Level: <b>First Responder</b>
<u><b>10 or 23%</b></u>	Emergency Medical Training – Level: <b>Basic</b>
<u><b>4 or 10%</b></u>	Emergency Medical Training – Level: <b>Intermediate</b>
<u><b>6 or 15%</b></u>	Emergency Medical Training – Level: <b>Paramedic</b>
<u><b>13 or 38%</b></u>	Hazardous Materials Training
<u><b>2 or 5%</b></u>	Associate or Bachelor's Degree in Fire Science or a related field
<u><b>14 or 34%</b></u>	Volunteer firefighting
_____	Other: <b>Wilderness First Responder</b>
	<b>Wildland Firefighter – 2</b>
	<b>Women in the Fire Service Conference</b>
	<b>Took a college class with hands-on training</b>

5. When were you hired on a full-time fire department?

**2001 – 2**  
**2000 – 4**  
**1999 – 4**  
**1998 – 3**  
**1997 – 7**  
**1994 – 3**  
**1993 – 2**  
**1991 – 1**  
**1990 – 3**  
**1988 – 2**  
**1987 – 3**  
**1986 – 1**  
**1984 – 1**  
**1983 – 1**  
**1982 – 1**  
**1979 – 1**

5. Since you have been employed in the fire service, how have the recruitment efforts changed? Check all that apply.

**13 or 32%** I haven't seen any change in the recruitment efforts at my department.

\_\_\_\_\_ The following recruitment efforts have been implemented since my hire. Check all that apply.

<b>Activity</b>	
Career fairs	<b>17 or 41%</b>
Special group presentations (Boy/Girl Scouts, sport teams, etc.)	<b>13 or 32%</b>
Department brochures	<b>14 or 34%</b>
Testing/hiring information packets	<b>17 or 41%</b>
Posters	<b>12 or 29%</b>
Television Public Service Announcements	<b>6 or 15%</b>
Newspaper Advertisements	<b>13 or 32%</b>
Radio Public Service Announcements	<b>5 or 12%</b>
Municipal Web Page	<b>16 or 39%</b>
Orientation/Information Sessions	<b>11 or 27%</b>
Open house/Station tours	<b>10 or 25%</b>
Practice sessions physical ability tests	<b>13 or 32%</b>
Mailer to organizations	<b>4 or 10%</b>
Staffed booth in public assembly area	<b>8 or 20%</b>
Ride along Program	<b>11 or 27%</b>
"Fire" Explorer Program	<b>12 or 29%</b>
Private Recruitment Firm	<b>1 or 2%</b>
Word of Mouth	<b>11 or 27%</b>
Other	<b>See below*</b>

- **High school prep courses for Fire Service Careers**
- **Recruiting division on department**
- **Recognizing the role firefighters play as available recruiters**



6. What recruitment efforts do you feel are the most successful in attracting women firefighter candidates?
- **Having women on recruitment team to speak honestly and candidly about what you are about to go through**
  - **To recruit women into the fire services, prospective applicants need to see women firefighters and talk to them about their journey to becoming a firefighter**
  - **Early age recruitment. Focusing on young adults so that they know this is available to them.**
  - **Getting the word out about the fire department and what the job description of being a firefighter is**
  - **Having females out in the community recruiting**
  - **Having women recruiters – Visible**
  - **When they get to talk, ride along with other women firefighters. In Denver, F.I.R.E. – a member sponsors an individual and works with them on hands-on, ride alongs, etc.**
  - **The women who are currently in the job, encouraging others and women working at career fairs and recruitment**
  - **Ride alongs, early recruiting, months or years before the tests with practice sessions for physical and oral tests**
  - **Person to person contact**
  - **Having female firefighters go out and make presentations to groups of athletic women, such as high school, junior college and college swim teams, soccer teams, etc.**
  - **Targeting likely populations, such as athletes and college students**
  - **Other female firefighters recruiting female firefighters**
  - **One thing that should be done is have a woman and a man at the job fairs or go and speak to the school**
  - **High school and college level “on-site” visits or career day presentations given by women firefighters**
  - **Youth programs such as Camp Blaze for young women. Targeted recruitment at schools – tables, sports teams, classes, at gymnasiums and health clubs, community fairs. Visibility of female firefighters in the media and department publications and activities. Women need to know that women do our job! They need to see us and they need to connect with someone, one-on-one, face to face.**
  - **Access to the hiring process at off times, i.e. a card to mail that will notify you of the next hiring process so that one is not hoping to ‘see’ advertisements at the right time**
  - **Start working with girls in junior high. Start them thinking**
  - **One-on-one, word of mouth**
  - **Poster recruitment at gyms, schools and amateur sporting events**
  - **Local women firefighter groups recruiting, mentoring and helping with the test prep**
  - **Word of mouth from female firefighters**

- Recruiting athletes from high schools to universities
- Women in the trades
- College classes
- Public announcements
- Girls scout and grade school presentations
- Women speaking to groups about firefighting
- Word of mouth
- Recruitment at the community college level
- Networking to other women in the profession
- Visibility. Women seeing women doing the job. Women firefighters recruiting women.
- A formal recruitment process. Ours has died off since women have been hired.
- I suggest meeting women at championship athletic events for high school and colleges.
- Informational sessions
- Just letting them know what is out there and available to women and the fact that they are not the only woman interested in this career. But you cannot push women into this field. They have to want to do it otherwise you set them up to fail.
- Word of mouth
- High school and junior high career fairs
- Hands-on opportunities
- Going to colleges and high schools with some women firefighters at different ranks
- Targeting specific groups that would be successful in the fire service and presenting one on one with those tar
- Start with high school groups and public forums

8. What programs are the most successful in preparing women to successfully pass the firefighter entrance written, physical ability and interview portions of the hiring process?

- Organized programs to prepare women especially for the physical demands of the job.
- Actual hands-on training with the CPAT equipment as well as task oriented exercises 3
- Practice with on line women firefighters
- Practice tests, written 4
- Physical agility test practice sessions 8
- Civil service practice test manuals
- Practice interviews 7
- Firefighter entrance written – usually general education would cover this, if technical then women need to know this.
- Mentoring by other women firefighters 8

- **Strength training 2**
- **6 to 12 week supervised workout program specific for the physical test**
- **Associate degree**
- **Women helping women learn techniques for faster physical agility test times, as well as assist with strength prep exercises if needed.**
- **Interview prep is equally important. Especially help with selling self in interview in terms that males listening will understand. Women generally are weaker in interviews. Have practice interviews with male firefighters**
- **Orientation and questions and answer sessions with female firefighters 2**
- **Free gym, a training program, a partner and mentor**
- **Explaining what is involved in the process**
- **Pre-service fire academies**

9. In your opinion, why are there not larger numbers of women applying for entry firefighter positions? Check all that apply and add others.

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b><u>31 or 76%</u></b> | Women do not consider a career in firefighting.                                   |
| <b><u>28 or 68%</u></b> | The general public still believes that women do not belong in the fire service.   |
| <b><u>26 or 63%</u></b> | Recruitment efforts do not reach potential women candidates.                      |
| <b><u>24 or 59%</u></b> | Recruitment efforts do not focus on attracting women candidates.                  |
| <b><u>20 or 49%</u></b> | There is a fire department attitude that women do not belong in the fire service. |
| <b><u>31 or 76%</u></b> | Women are not prepared physically for career in the fire service.                 |
| <b><u>5 or 12%</u></b>  | Women are not prepared to pass the written fire service exam.                     |
| <b><u>8 or 20%</u></b>  | Women are not prepared well educationally for a career in the fire service.       |
|                         | If you check this, what do they normally lack...                                  |
| <b><u>5 or 12%</u></b>  | Firefighter certification   |
| <b><u>3 or 7%</u></b>   | Driver/Operator certification   |
| <b><u>5 or 12%</u></b>  | Emergency Medical certification   |
| <b><u>3 or 7%</u></b>   | Associate Degree  |
| <b><u>2 or 5%</u></b>   | Bachelor's Degree   |
| <b><u>13 or 32%</u></b> | Women do not have previous firefighting experience.                               |
- Other:
- **Women not having enough confidence to do this, being intimidated by the male dominant, not being “truly” encouraged.**
  - **A woman must be ready to make a political statement by being a firefighter, to stand up to her family, friends and community, in a way that most men don't have to**
  - **Wildland firefighters are not paid well at the entry level and work 6 months then are laid off for winter**
  - **Women may be physically fit, but lack practice and knowledge of techniques for faster agility test times**
  - **The demands of this job require certain characteristics that most women do not develop, i.e. competition, driven, strong, both mentally and physically,**

independent and other typically identified as “male traits”. So...when looking at statistics in Human Resources, personnel tables on “availability” of women in the population for the job of firefighting, the percentages are usually around 5 to 10%

- Female’s attitude of firefighting: conditioned to be a man’s job
- I think that family plays a big role – having kids and being a firefighter is very hard
- Mentally we tell ourselves we can’t do it so we won’t try.
- Women fear entering non-traditional jobs.
- Lack of family care, maternity plans and coverage
- Not aware of schedule and pay
- May women don’t entertain the idea of such a “physical” and/or “dangerous” job
- Girls aren’t (or weren’t) brought up with firefighting as a career option

10. What role can a community or technical college play in increasing the number of women candidates?

<b><u>28 or 68%</u></b>	Firefighting “camps”
<b><u>30 or 73%</u></b>	Fitness training
<b><u>23 or 56%</u></b>	Fire Service certification training
<b><u>32 or 48%</u></b>	Career information sessions

Other:

- Target groups of athletic women and then expose them to a true picture of the plusses and minuses of a career in the fire service
- Sexual harassment and discrimination classes for male firefighters
- Assist fire departments with test validation
- Diversity training program for fire departments
- Work with girls at early ages – 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Invite firefighters of both genders and all races to speak about the job, experience, etc. in many formats, not just career fairs

11. How can the college attract women into participating in a “firefighter prep” program?

- Most women are intimidated by a male role model. In order for you to attract more women, try having a female of any race who is middle aged, 30 and only been in the service for a few years. You need someone to represent you who has any kind of experience, still the drive to be the best, good at attracting all kinds of people and young at heart with a soul to fight fires. A lot of women have this but can’t find it. It is this positive person who can show women and men that they have it in them and how to find it.
- Visibility
- Start with short one day adventure camps –rappelling, aerial climb, etc. Invite female firefighter from other cities, states to visit and talk (women from other places give a bigger context to the profession)
- Offer one on one mentoring (even over the internet, long distance)

- Have women only adventure day, orientation sessions, etc. with women only trainers and orienters.
- Start with younger women in the community – do high school outreach that the college sponsors
- Offer them a job after completing the prep program. Wildland firefighters call this a “coop” program. Also have an apprentice program – entry level, basic and advanced, plus a training plan for multiple years and different exposure to all aspects of wildland firefighting
- Junior high and high school recruitment, especially among varsity and intramural sports teams 4
- Actively seek fire department participation
- Booths in job fairs
- Go to athletic teams at the community college level. These women are typically prepared for blue collar jobs and team players who aren’t afraid of hard work
- Encourage women and let them know they aren’t stuck in the program if they feel it is not for them
- Fire Service Classes with hands-on experience too. This could include a field trip to a firehouse, an internship on a department or with WFS
- Recruit with women firefighters...start early in the schools...middle and high school to encourage women to look at firefighting as a career choice
- More women instructors and counselors
- Have it as an elective toward a “traditional” degree 2
- Should start recruiting at the Junior High level. Share opportunities at this level, fire camps, volunteer departments, courses, fire explorers, etc. Most women do not know these opportunities even exist 6
- Get women currently in service to participate in programs that reach other girls or women. School career day, Girl Scout mentoring.
- Reach women at a younger age and open the door that firefighting is an option
- Contact women athletic teams
- Advertise and have successful women in the department there to show a career is attainable. You would need highly motivated, open-minded people to run this program
- I think it would be crucial to have a recruiting team with a diverse makeup to get out to the colleges
- Advertisement featuring women firefighters
- Career fairs 3
- Posters in the dorms and women’s locker rooms 4
- Solicit help from high school counselors. Have them discuss the option of firefighting with athletic young women

- Use the program as a leadership/problem-solving program rather than just a “firefighter prep” program. Stress that the skills they use will help them in their every day life even if they don’t go into the fire service
- Use women pictured in the college brochure
- Have women only classes
- Stress the benefits of the career. Most women do not know that it is a good career with good pay and benefits for single, married or head of the household women.
- Advertise the many “hats” women in fire wear: Firefighting, medical, training, public education

13. Other comments:

- I am very interested in beginning a community college program directed towards women to encourage careers in the fire service.
- Women need to feel welcome. Start telling young girls they can be firefighters. Make sure facilities are there for women “if you build it they will come”. Make sure all uniforms and safety gear fits women and order women “styles” if the women want it (women’s shirts and pants). Have policies such as hair, pregnancy and piercings that are reasonable for women.
- In our department, we barely receive 30 days notice before the hiring process starts. That is our biggest administrative problem. And with Prop 9, anti-affirmative action, targeted recruiting by an employer is illegal. So employee groups or individuals must do any targeted recruiting we hope to do with the short notice it is hard to make it happen well. The department barely advertises in hopes to decrease the number of applicants (cost I think). There is no recruiting position in administration, a paid position helps
- I am currently on light duty in the personnel office. I notice and so has the gentleman that I am helping out, that since I’ve been going to job fairs and speaking one-on-one with women, that we have had larger numbers of women applicants than ever.
- Athletic teams at the community college level, schedule and pay...these women will work hard
- The women who passed the test and remain on the job to this day are self-motivated. Most were athletic or have a strong physical presence
- I feel being a firefighter takes a certain personality and recruiting women is difficult because the woman has to have the drive and excitement for the job. As a whole, it is always going to be difficult for women to be accepted.
- Getting women to pass the physical is only half the problem. Getting them through recruit school is the other. Not always a physical problem, Many women have not been exposed to harsh environments that are some what militaristic and are quickly alienated when confronted. All that aggression can be overwhelming emotionally and compounded by the physical demands—too much for most.

- This is an area of concern for women firefighters Efforts to recruit seen to be tapering off. This will be a challenge with a shrinking work force.
- There is a program out east that works with women on welfare to train and prepare them as firefighters to take tests as a part of getting them off welfare.
- On talking to all the other women I found a new appreciation for my fire department concerning how advanced we are in recruitment efforts. We have 30 women and our officers offer excellent training and mentoring programs. I feel I'm backed in my decisions and encouraged to get more training
- A successful recruitment program begins with proper education. Women can do this job if they understand fully what is expected of them, which is the same as what is expected of all members of the department. It is a very physical and mentally demanding career and should not be entered into lightly as with any career choice. Once the decision has been made, every effort should be made to support and promote that individual for a prosperous career.
- It is the same between men and women. You have to have a desire to be in the fire service. It's hard to put it into words. You can recruit all day long, it doesn't matter. If the person that sees the recruiting isn't interested then they are not going to apply. Being a firefighter is a lot of hard work and if they are not into doing physical labor, firefighting is not for them.
- The word needs to get out that becoming a firefighter is an option for women. Young girls need to be exposed to women firefighters so they can view the occupation as "normal", instead of viewing us as abnormal since people rarely see women on the job.

### **OPTIONAL INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

**32 or 71%** Please send me a copy of your final results.

**7 or 17%** Please contact me.

Other comments: